

“What We Have Here Is a Failure To Communicate” (Strother Martin, *Cool Hand Luke*)

Ronald Reagan was called “The Great Communicator” because he had a way with words. I’m not exactly sure whether that means people understood what Ronnie *intended* to say or if it means they only *thought* they understood? I, for one, thought I understood the President to say that his economic plan would balance the federal budget. In retrospect, I think what he really meant to say was that his economic plan would balance the budget IF he did not have to spend too much money on defense to defeat communism, which he did.

The world has been thoroughly confused by language ever since the Tower of Babel incident. It’s entirely understandable that we would have communication problems between nations who speak different languages, but what bothers me is that it is not much better when we communicate directly with one another in the same language.

In my efforts to be a good writer, I have always been fascinated by the art of communication, and I work very hard at saying what I want to say in a way that others will understand. In spite of my devotion to that cause, if there is anyone more misunderstood than I am, I’d like to know who it is.

Consider this: the lower animals don’t use formal language at all, and they seem to communicate just fine with a simple repertoire of grunts, whines, barks, moos, whinkers or hee-haws. I wonder if dogs ever correct one another when they are having a conversation. Does a Bloodhound try to tell a Cockapoo how to bark properly? Do cows need to learn a second language to communicate with the hogs? I don’t think so. I’ve never seen an oinking cow, or a mooing hog.

Words are supposed to help us humans communicate better, but I’m not so sure of that. We have way more words than we need in the English language, and the few that we actually use we can’t pronounce correctly. Building a big vocabulary is sort of like learning to dance. If you get too good at it, you won’t be able to find anybody else to dance with. If you get up on the dance floor by yourself, people will think you’re trying to show out. Likewise, what good does it do to know a lot of words if nobody else knows them?

It certainly doesn't improve communication -- unless you are talking to yourself, which I do a lot.

I was advised long ago that if one hopes to be successful as a public writer (newspapers, magazines, books, etc.), one should always write on an educational level no higher than the Third Grade. If this is true, then perhaps it would be even better to just go ahead and communicate in grunts, shrugs, oinks or growls like the simple-minded creatures do. This seems to work well enough for teenagers.

As I watch the daily news updates on the current America-Iranian War negotiations, my anxieties and concerns about the inherent flaws in human communications are only increased. Here we have our brightest, most educated communicators in the whole wide world hard at work trying to "make a deal" and each side seems to be under the impression that the other side is about to give up any day now.

If only we could discover the original pure Adamic language used by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where humans and snakes and plants, and even rocks and dirt, could hear and understand one another perfectly, then maybe we would not have such a disagreeable world as we do today. Can we get a committee to work on that?

Lloyd Albritton is a U. S. Marine Corps veteran who served overseas in the Vietnam War. He is the Commander of Atmore's VFW Post 7016. Veterans interested in joining the VFW may call or text Lloyd at (850)281-3233 or email him at cmd@vfw7016.org for more information. Visit the post website at www.vfw7016.org to inquire about joining, to make a donation or to purchase a ticket in our great raffles.